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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 000319

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)  
SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT 2: A RIFT FORMS BETWEEN  
MILINKEVICH AND KOZULIN

REF: MINSK 307

Classified By: Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: On March 22, key member of the Aleksandr Milinkevich presidential campaign Jaroslav Romanchuk offered Ambassador a critical assessment of the team's efforts to promote democratic change following the likely fraudulent March 19 elections. Romanchuk, a senior member of Anatoly Lebedko's United Civic Party (UCP) and director of an independent think tank, noted the new rift between Milinkevich and Kozulin over the October Square demonstrations and the teams' inability to coordinate efforts. In addition, both candidates' teams have been unable to create a strategy, much less follow through with any plans that they do prepare. Romanchuk predicted that the opposition's post-election movement, which appeared to have so much momentum at the beginning, could soon be over if the leadership continues to remain indecisive. End Summary.

Milinkevich Breaks Agreement with Kozulin  
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12. (C) Romanchuk said that the demonstration, which began after the election polls closed on March 19 and had initially gathered 10,000-12,000 people (reftel), was losing steam. Mass detentions of participants are to blame for the dwindling number of demonstrators, but so is Milinkevich's and Kozulin's lack of preparation and leadership. Both leaders realized that the decreasing participation in the demonstration only helped the GOB authorities to further discredit the opposition as a group that enjoys little popular support and could make it easier for authorities to violently end the demonstration.

13. (C) Looking for an exit strategy, Kozulin and Milinkevich agreed to appeal to the demonstrators to disband and prepare for the planned March 25 protest. However, on March 21 Milinkevich broke his agreement with Kozulin and encouraged the demonstrators to continue until March 25. According to Romanchuk, Milinkevich's wife intervened and advised her husband to support the demonstration. Backing out of the agreement infuriated Kozulin, who later blamed Milinkevich should the demonstrators suffer at the hands of the authorities.

Demonstrators Act Independently  
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14. (C) Romanchuk said the demonstrators were acting independently and would not follow orders from Kozulin or Milinkevich. However, the demonstrators, comprised of youth organizations Malady Front, Right Alliance, Zubr, and members of other unregistered organizations are allegedly united and will continue until they are removed by the authorities. Romanchuk doubted NGO Charter 97 and Zubr organizers Andrei

Sannikov and Dmitry Bondorenko had much influence over the demonstrators, who had expected a plan and leadership from the presidential candidates, only to be disappointed.

#### Milinkevich and Kozulin Not Coordinating With Each Other

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15. (C) Romanchuk criticized Milinkevich,s and Kozulin,s headquarters for failing to work together. Kozulin was now infuriated with Milinkevich and it was impossible to get the two to work together. Milinkevich,s team continues to ignore Kozulin,s level of support because he and his party were not part of the 10 Coalition. Romanchuk said a communication gap and lack of trust fueled the divide. Romanchuk suggested to Milinkevich,s team to not alienate Kozulin, but include him in plans to create a new interim shadow government.

#### Milinkevich and Kozulin Unorganized and Unprepared

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16. (C) Romanchuk noted both leaders, lack of a plan and determination. The Milinkevich and Kozulin teams did not expect to be able to congregate on October Square after the polls closed on March 19 and, therefore, did not have prepared speeches or a plan. The opposition leaders promised support and clear and decisive action, but nothing materialized. Now Milinkevich was asking people to gather on March 25, but no preparations have yet been made.

17. (C) According to Romanchuk, Kozulin,s team was chaotic and Milinkevich,s team was only reactive; neither one plans ahead. Milinkevich lacks the political will to make decisions and when he does, often consults with his wife.

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Romanchuk opined that Milinkevich,s team must soon form a strategy with concrete plans. If not, his position as a leader will be over and the opposition would have to start from scratch.

#### Opposition Has Found A Basis to Contest the Vote

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18. (C) Romanchuk said opposition lawyers might have found a legitimate way to contest the presidential elections. After the results were tallied, the GOB distributed a bar graph depicting the percentage of the population that had voted against each candidate. Romanchuk noted that since the voting ballots did not provide such data and since no exist polls were conducted, the graph,s empirical data was questionable and could be determined as falsified.

#### Romanchuk Gives Alternate Election Results

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19. (C) Romanchuk estimated that 25 ) 30 percent of the population voted for Milinkevich and 6 ) 15 percent for Kozulin. In a discussion with a Minsk election commission official, Romanchuk learned that Lukashenko had received much less than officially announced, but likely received 55 percent of the vote. Romanchuk believes that Lukashenko would not win if the election process was truly democratic. The actual voting process may have been relatively transparent and fair, but every step of the election process leading up to Election Day was controlled by Lukashenko. If equal press existed and the opposition was not harassed, Lukashenko could not have won.

#### Comment

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110. (C) Romanchuk,s assessment of the situation in the opposition camp is disappointing, to say the least. It was obvious the leadership was not prepared for the large crowd on October Square on March 19. The leaders failed to use the

moment and capitalize on the crowd,s enthusiasm and desire to be led. The key challenge for the opposition and for Milinkevich, in particular, if he is to lead the opposition, is to maintain unity, leadership and the momentum of the opposition,s message, which has attracted more people than expected. That is the message we are giving to them as well.

Krol